

THE AUTHORIZED VERSION IS A BIBLE LEXICON

March 22, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

Alexander W. McClure, D.D. (1808-1865) wrote a series of biographical sketches of the King James Bible translators called *The Translators Revived*. It was published in New York by the Board of Publications of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in 1855. Dr. McClure had a very high regard for the King James Bible and did not believe it could ever be replaced. Consider the following excerpt from this fascinating book:

"To this testimony let there be added that of Dr. Alexander Geddes, a learned minister of the Church of Rome, who himself also attempted a re-translation of the Bible into English: '... IF ACCURACY, FIDELITY, AND THE STRICTEST ATTENTION TO THE LETTER OF THE TEXT, BE SUPPOSED TO CONSTITUTE THE QUALITIES OF AN EXCELLENT VERSION, THIS OF ALL VERSIONS, MUST, IN GENERAL, BE ACCOUNTED THE MOST EXCELLENT. Every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter and point, seem to have been weighed with the nicest exactitude; and expressed, either in the text, or margin, with the greatest precision.' Pagninus himself is hardly more literal; and it was well remarked by Robertson, above a hundred years ago, that IT MAY SERVE AS A LEXICON OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE, AS WELL AS FOR A TRANSLATION.'

"Dr. Adam Clarke, the Wesleyan, in the General Preface to his Commentary on the Bible, having spoken of the common version as superior in accuracy and fidelity to the other European versions, adds the following declaration--'Nor is this its only praise; THE TRANSLATORS HAVE SEIZED THE VERY SPIRIT AND SOUL OF THE ORIGINAL, AND EXPRESSED THIS ALMOST EVERYWHERE WITH PATHOS AND ENERGY. Besides, our translators have not only made a standard translation, but they have made their translation the standard of our language" (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*, pp. 11,59,61,63-66,235-239).

In this book Dr. McClure claimed that the listing of testimonials to the excellency of the King James Bible could be "swelled to the size of a volume" in his day. That gives us an idea of how the King James Bible was revered in the mid 1800s.

McClure's quotation of Robertson that the King James Bible may serve as a lexicon of the Hebrew language is very important. Many fail to understand this truth. The King James Bible is as much a lexicon on the biblical languages as it is merely a translation. For one to run, say, to Vine or Thayer or Brown or Strong or Barry or Zodites or Webster, and to accept the interpretation of ONE man as to the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word, while slighting the deliberated and agreed interpretation of DOZENS of men is not wise. The wording of the King James Bible represents the labors of almost one hundred years of brilliant, believing, sacrificial,

godly scholarship. Dozens of some of the best biblical linguists who have ever lived applied their minds and their prayers to translating into English **PRECISELY** what the Hebrew and Greek text mean. That was their goal. When someone says, "The Greek in this passage means such and such," they should never fail to mention that the Greek in that passage also means exactly what the King James translators said it means. It is important to explain and interpret Bible words, but it is never wise to correct or criticize those words and to try to replace them with one's own private translation. Unless one has the capability in the biblical languages to correct the Old Masters, one is wise not to pretend to a level of scholarship that he does not possess. Be careful, friends. Am I saying we should not use lexicons and study aids? Not at all. Use all the tools you can find--the lexicons, the grammars, the dictionaries, the encyclopedias. They are helpful **INASMUCH AS THEY ARE FAITHFUL TO THE WORD OF GOD**. Learn Greek and Hebrew and Latin and German, if you please. They can help you. **BUT DON'T BE DECEIVED INTO THINKING THAT THE WORDING OF THE KING JAMES VERSION ITSELF IS SOME KIND OF SECONDARY WITNESS TO THE MEANING OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT, AND THAT SOME EXTRA-BIBLICAL LEXICON HAS AN AUTHORITY SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE AUTHORIZED VERSION ITSELF**. [This article is excerpted from *For Love of the Bible: The Battle for the King James Bible and the Received Text from 1800 to Present*, by David W. Cloud, copyright 1995, Way of Life Literature, 1219 N. Harns Rd., Oak Harbor, WA 98277. This 460-page hard cover book is \$29.95 + \$3.50 S/H.]